

Jesus is the vine and his father is the vine-grower. The Father gives the growth to those who are connected to the vine. Jesus calls us to abide in him so that we may bear much fruit and be his disciples. In order for us to bear much fruit, we have to submit to the care of the vine-grower and trust him for the growth. Not only that, but we also have to submit to pruning in order to bear even more fruit. By staying attached to the vine, we the branches can ask for whatever we wish and it will be done for us. What fruit do we want to ask the vine-grower to bring forth on our branches?

In the story about Philip and the Eunuch, what is the fruit? Philip follows the suggestion of the angel and goes down to the road from Jerusalem to Gaza. He doesn't know what he is going to find, but when he gets there, he sees an Ethiopian eunuch who was in charge of the entire treasury of the queen going by in his chariot. Then, the Holy Spirit gave direction to Philip, "Go over to this chariot and join it." Philip doesn't come up with reasons for why this would not be a wise move, given that this was an important and rich man compared to him. He just trusts the Spirit and ran up to it. When he joins the chariot, he hears him reading aloud from the prophet Isaiah, and Philip asks him if he understands what he is reading. The eunuch answers with a question, and Philip takes his cue and hops in to help him understand.

By trusting and listening to the Spirit, Philip allows himself to end up in a place where he can witness to his love of Jesus and his understanding of Scripture. He doesn't do anything but begin exactly where the eunuch is. He lets himself be welcomed into the chariot, willingly joining the eunuch in what he is doing. He simply listens and responds. Starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus.

We can imagine them, riding along, reading the passage the eunuch was reading, and then moving on from there, reading other passages and connecting them to the story of Jesus. The eunuch is interested. He asks questions. A conversation ensues. Then, all of a sudden, the eunuch sees water and exclaims, "Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?"

So, they pull over, jump down and go into the water together so Philip can baptize the eunuch. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord

sent Philip to Azotus, where he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea. The eunuch went on his way rejoicing.

What is the fruit in this story? How did God help both Philip and the eunuch grow? The eunuch learned about Jesus and was so enthralled, that as soon as he sees water, he asks to be baptized, comes up out of the water and goes on his way rejoicing. Philip, for his part, is happy to be invited to sit in the chariot with him and talk about Scripture and Jesus, get asked for baptism, and then continue on to tell about Jesus to other people in other places.

Was the fruit the eunuch's joy? Was it his baptism? Was it Philip's openness to the Spirit who kept prompting him? Was it being asked to talk about God? Was it the combination of all those things, and more?

Whatever we think it is, both the eunuch and Philip acted like disciples. They listened to God's Word. They let themselves be guided by the Holy Spirit. They acted in unexpected ways, wholly appropriate to the situation. They were learners and teachers, followers and leaders. The eunuch's questions brought out Philip's teaching, and Philip's teaching brought out the eunuch's desire for Jesus and for baptism. Both of them let the moment happen, despite how easy it would have been for either of them to ignore the other, either because of difference in social standing, or because of their busy schedules.

I have to think that each of them was changed by the encounter. They got to witness the power of God's Spirit at work in themselves and in each other. They both continued on their way, conscious of how God had given them growth. They had each been a kind of interruption to the other's day—like getting interrupted by the Holy Spirit and going with it.

In our own world of busy schedules and to-do lists, the Holy Spirit is just as capable of breaking in and helping us grow and produce fruit as she was with Philip and the eunuch. So, I find myself wondering what surprises are waiting for us in the days and weeks ahead. Like Jesus told his disciples, when we remain attached to the vine, we can ask for whatever we wish and it will be done for us. I'm wondering what fruit **we** want to ask the vine-grower to bring forth in **us**?